

It's our own kind of artist figure

MR. GODDARD, fair enough, would have his centre. Calypso and steelband are national products, boosts to the tourist industry as well as culture, and if the output and quality are to increase some sort of factory is needed.

Pegasus, our most aggressively altruistic organisation, has been drafting plans for a centre. I'm sure Mr. Goddard has been at their meetings. The Government still has to build a Community Centre for Port-of-Spain.

The Art Society, fairer still, are going ahead building their centre. The National Museum needs more space, perhaps even another building. It's central enough, but it could be more of a centre.

Cold patrons

Meanwhile the theatrical companies must be satisfied with ellipses, oblongs or square circles that don't quite work. TDC, Strolling Players, The Company of Players, the Theatre Workshop, the Phoenix, if only there was a Centre, a little theatre where they could rehearse and perform.

For these various projects the same old patrons appear on the list. Foundations and Oil Companies and Rum Manufacturers, doling out pittances. We haven't heard from another projected Centre, the Little Carib, for some time.

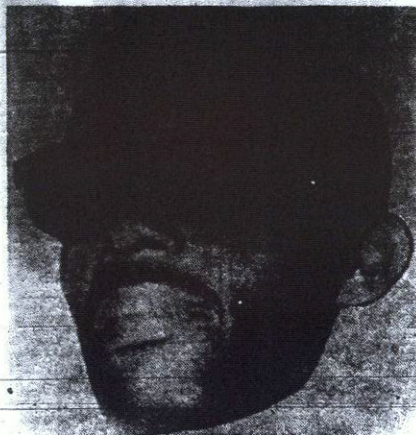
What one hears is rumour: that the University is interested in such a

project, that the Government, if some common agreement could be reached, would be more than 'interested.' The groups revolve in circles, changing centres.

It's obvious that all these circles interlock. That Pegasus' will be a segment of the Steelband and Calypsonians, that every theatre company has the same plans in mind. But not one of these different centres can be devoted wholly to the organisation that conceives it. Too many in fact are thought of as clubs, not as working places.

Is the idea of a complex too far-fetched, a single design whose centre could radiate into rehearsal rooms that are sound-proof? The proximity of one art to the other, the atmosphere of casual but serious exchange, one of amity and experiment could give all our niggardly, struggling or pretentious ventures a focus. Provided the dancer or artist doesn't think himself superior to the pan-man.

I'm sure there're some to whom Mr. Goddard's centre evokes hallucinations of pan-beaters in cars smoking pot or boozing or just idling away, whappie and the occasional



MR. GEORGE GODDARD

wahbeen. The association has done a lot to dispel the old-time concept of the pan-man, but the prejudices are still there.

One only has to see how disciplined the best bands are to know that they are usually more responsible, more serious, rehearse more than other 'artists.' Still, the figures quoted for such centres never look enough.

If they were built the artists would soon chafe at their limitations, and architectural mistakes are death. They can cramp and frustrate the performer.

Trinidad has evolved its own kind of artist-figure. In the pan-man, the untrained musician, in the steelband, an untrained orchestra, in the calypsonian, a kind of poet, in the carnival craftsman a kind of sculptor.

The vision

An architect designing either the complex or a single centre must take this into account. His building must contain the same sense of search, of openness and apprenticeship as the newer art-forms.

He would have to avoid grandeur, the vision of a mini-Lincoln Centre, as well as the ad-hoc architecture of the community centres. He must be realistic, and he must avoid imposing a structure on an art that is still evolving.

What he needs to know about the problems of a

IN THE PAN-MAN,

THE STEEL-BAND,

THE CALYPSONIAN,

THE MAS' CRAFTSMAN

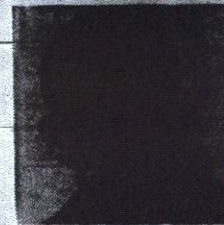
there were decisions, perilously made, half in fear of the crowd's anger.

Since then I've marvelled at a few decisions myself, but Dimanche Gras does strange things to calypsonians. Some get hoarse, some panic at the last few hours and switch to 'decent' tunes, some try the most outlandish gear without success.

Earlier in the season I thought the tunes for this year poor, but the subliminal persistence of steelbands, TV and the radio have made them sound the equal of any season, and perhaps they are. All of this threatens the gentlemen who will award the crown tonight.

If I were up there it would be hard to get Melody's tunes out of my head, to avoid giving him more points just because I like his manner or wish him the best for his 'come-back,' and, of course, to avoid giving Cypher the crown outright without really hearing the others.

The only thing is I keep seeing Cypher glass-eyed under that enormous boater which is a crown by itself. These pre-judgments are no different to when I played judge, but often the winner is so obvious that the work is easy, and once the competition begins all the favouritism dissolves in the heat of the contest.



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Notes
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CALYPSO AUDIENCE